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## *The Legend of* GENGHIS MUSKOX

How a Minneapolis adventurer ended up  
murdered on the Alaskan frontier

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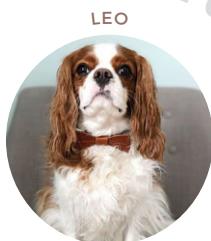
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# CITY PAGES

Sept 18-24, 2019

VOLUME 39 | NUMBER 2024



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OFFICE HOURS Monday-Friday  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ISSN 0744-0456. City Pages is published weekly by Star Tribune Media Company, LLC. City Pages is located at 650 3rd Ave. S., Ste. 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55488. City Pages is available free of charge, limited to one copy per reader. Additional copies of the current issue may be purchased at the City Pages office for \$1, payable in advance. No person may, without prior written permission of City Pages, take more than one copy of each City Pages weekly issue. Subscriptions are available for \$100 per year. Subscription orders must include check or money order payable to City Pages, and should be mailed to City Pages Subscriptions, 650 3rd Ave. S., Ste. 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55488. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. Postmaster: Send address changes to City Pages, 650 3rd Ave. S., Ste. 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55488.

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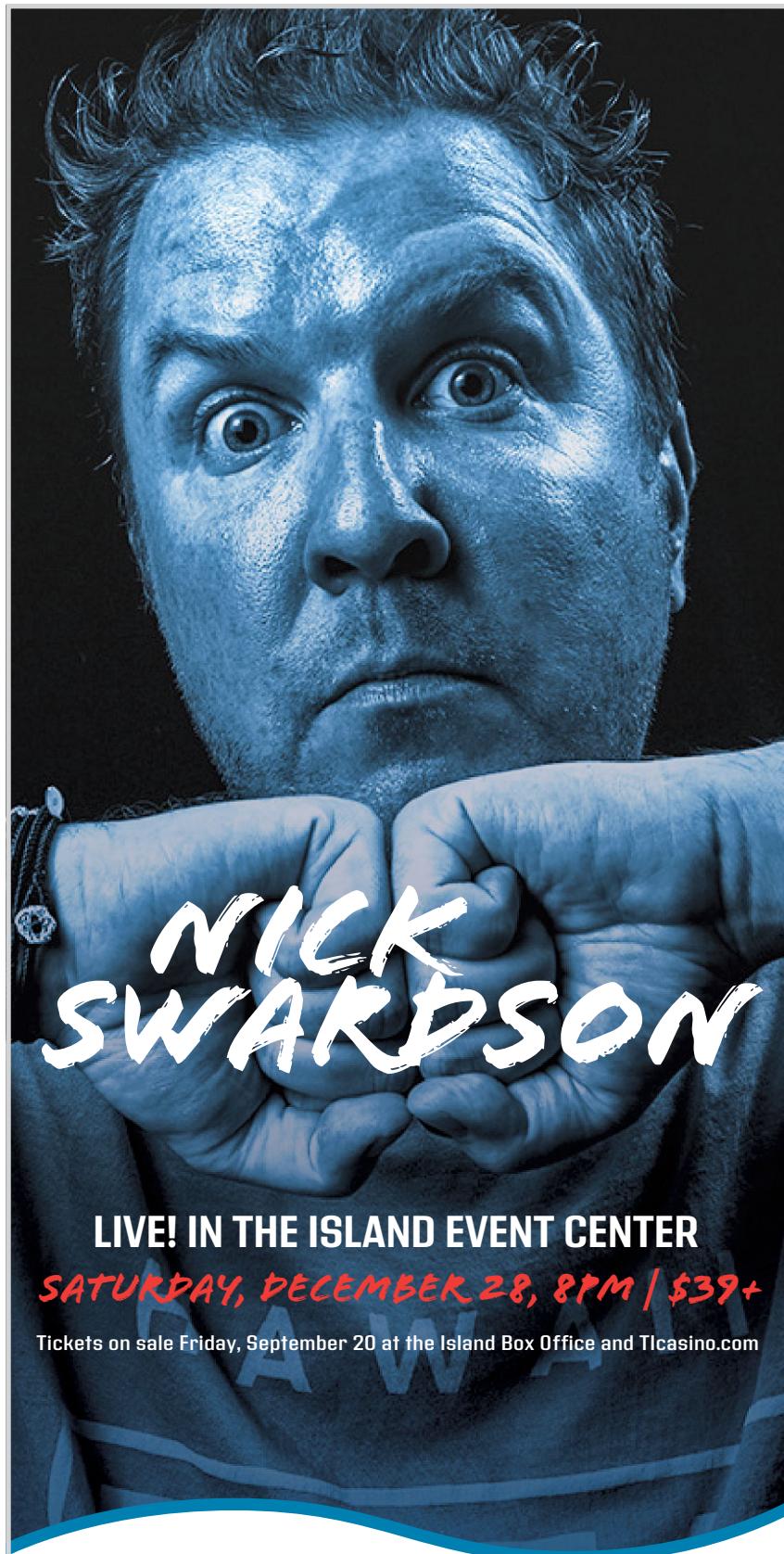
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## THE SHORTLIST

'Serial con man' is turning St. Paul's Ecolab tower into apartments, grocery  
*at citypages.com*



GLEN STUBBE

## THE STAT SHEET

**25**

Percentage of Minnesota's electricity that now comes from renewable sources

**1/3**

Amount by which the state has cut emissions from electricity production since 2005

**30**

Percentage of Minnesota adults considered obese by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control

**63**

Percentage of Minneapolis residents who support adding 250 new police officers by 2025

**"I give this lady two opposable thumbs down!"**

Reader Tom Leonhardt responds to "Braindead schools boss questions why they're teaching 'unproven' theory of evolution," at [citypages.com](http://citypages.com).

## EMPTY SEATS

**IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS** since the University of Minnesota football team sold out its 50,000-seat stadium, among the smallest in the Big 10. Even after giving away free tickets to faculty and staff last Saturday, swaths of empty seats remained.

High ticket prices, a historic shortage of victories, and an early cupcake schedule will create these woes. But it's also part of a growing disinterest in watching live college football.

Mighty Alabama recently launched an app to keep its student section from emptying early. Users earn membership points if they're tracked to the stadium through the end of the game. But this too has backfired. The school is facing accusations of Big Brotherism and putting health at risk after scores of fans fell ill during a recent game when temps rose to 100 degrees.

## POPULAR STORIES AT CITYPAGES.COM

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# HEAR NO EVIL

Conservatives rally against sex ed that would teach students about... sex

**B**ack in March, Minnesota Rep. Todd Lippert (D-Northfield) introduced a bill with a simple premise. The way Minnesota schools teach sex ed is “inconsistent” and “inadequate.”

“The main ways we were educated about sexual health were through fear tactics instead of information that could actually be useful,” Northfield High student Grace Muth said in testimony for the bill. There wasn’t much on getting consent, or getting checked for STIs, or how you could have a healthy sex life if you were anything but straight.

So Lippert wanted the Department of Education to develop a “developmentally appropriate” and “medically accurate” curriculum. Districts or charters could opt out, so long as they replaced it with a program approved by the department.

It had significant Democratic support, but Republicans fought to have it killed.

State-mandated sex ed, Rep. Eric Lucero (R-Dayton) said, should not include “diverse sexual orientations and gender identities” because, cryptically, “that’s not biology.”

The bill was sacked, and the Minnesota Child Protection League stands vigilant against its return. Its mission is to “protect” children from sharing bathrooms with trans classmates and being “brainwashed” into tolerating gay people.

Comprehensive sex education “removes all natural and protective boundaries for children and teens, encouraging early sexual exploration in graphic detail,” the league’s website warns. That includes “porn-like images,” and letting “unlicensed Planned Parenthood and gender activists into your child’s classroom.”

The league didn’t respond to interview requests. But on its Facebook page, people are getting pretty fired up.



GETTY

“This is child abuse,” one commenter said. “Total depravity,” another added.

“This could probably be propaganda to get fetal tissue from abortions,” another speculated.

To be clear, this curriculum doesn’t actually exist yet, and Planned Parenthood appears nowhere in the legislation. But the group does think it’s a good idea—as does the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault and dozens of researchers.

Multiple studies have shown that giving students ongoing education makes them less likely to have sex at a young age. It also

decreases the rates of diseases, unplanned pregnancies, and unhealthy, abusive relationships. Condom usage, however? Way up.

There’s a simple reason for why that may be. Keeping kids in the dark about sex doesn’t make them any less likely to have it. It does, however, make them more likely to mess up.

“I think this legislation is simply about the health and safety of our youth,” Lippert says. It’s about teaching them to treat their own bodies and the bodies of others with respect. And yes, he says, his bill is coming back next session. —HANNAH JONES

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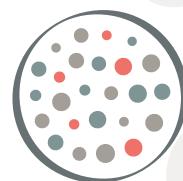
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## NOTHING BUT HEMP



Reported vaping illnesses and deaths continue: What CBD fans need to know.

Though many viewed them as safe alternatives to cigarettes when they rose to prominence, recent reports have shown negative health effects from electronic cigarettes and vapes.

Deaths from THC vaping specifically are up to five people overall in the U.S., with Minnesota recently reporting its first fatality from the products. Federal authorities have advised all of those who vape should stop immediately until they can determine what additives are causing the smokers' illnesses and deaths, a matter of special importance for CBD fans.

According to the Minneapolis Star Tribune, the Minnesota Department of Health said the state's fatality came when an over-65-year-old patient who'd been hospitalized for months died of complications to lung diseases from vaping.

Others in Illinois, California, Indiana and Oregon died from similar conditions and as many as 215 illnesses from vapes have been reported nationwide.

"We are committed to finding out what is making people sick," Robert Redfield, director of the CDC, told VICE magazine. "All available information is being carefully analyzed, and these initial findings are helping us narrow the focus of our investigation."

Cannabis blog Leafly suggests that some possible sources of the contamination in vape oil are addictive like medium-chain triglyceride(MCT), vegetable glycerin(VG) and propylene glycol(PG).

Beyond the makeup of these vape juice recipes, a certain culture within some vaping circles that doesn't accommodate for moderation hasn't helped people to partake of the hobby healthfully.

Fans of cannabidiol, or CBD, the non-psychoactive relative of the THC that makes marijuana users high, should be aware of the alternatives to vaping in these times. If they choose to continue vaping, avoiding synthetic additives and other toxic particles should be seriously considered.

At Nothing But Hemp, CBD enthusiasts and newcomers can find important information about cannabis products and the effects they have on the body.

CBD tinctures, distillates and edibles are all available at varying levels of concentration, along with the compound in the form of skin care products and other offerings.

Nothing But Hemp also carries vaping products, and will continue to do so. Consumers across the country should be aware of the severe warnings and investigations by federal regulators into which vape chemicals and effects are responsible for illness and death as they consider whether to vape.

At Nothing But Hemp, organic and all-natural products are key to our function, and customers can expect these in our vaping offerings as well.

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TOMMY DIXON

# *The Legend of* GENGHIS MUSKOX

How a Minneapolis adventurer ended up murdered on the Alaskan frontier

**D**ays after Genghis Muscox died in a remote town in southern Alaska, a to-do list was found in his cabin. Among the items: "Tan horse hide," "yoga, start," and the ambitious "learn celestial navigation."

The latter reflected his grand plan to build a sailboat with wood from his father's tree farm, which he would captain through the Great Lakes, then across the globe.

The experienced sailor and fisherman spent years planning this ultimate pursuit

of liberty. Now it would become just a footnote of his 27 years.

Genghis was something of a folk hero within a certain subset: a wild man with a wild name who could turn big, outlandish ideas into realities. Some saw

*By RYAN WARNER*

adventure. And both met tragic demises in the wilderness of Alaska.

But Genghis was flashier than McCandless, with more expertise. This was no meandering, ill-prepared novice. Still, the two men were propelled by sheer force of will without glancing

back at practicality. Olivia Engel, a friend of Genghis', puts it mildly when she says, "A sense of movement made him more content with life than any kind of place or situation."

Genghis grew up in north Minneapolis. The home had no television, so he developed a love of more traditional hobbies. He began fishing as a toddler and spinning his own wool at six. He went on to make leather moccasins from deer hide, build bicycles from scratch, fashion knives and bows from raw materials.

One passion tended to bounce to the next, says his mother, Susan, who runs an organic cafe in Minneapolis. "He would just decide that there were certain things he wanted to do, and he would get books and learn how to do them."

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Adds father John, a carpenter: "He would accomplish something, like he made six or seven bows, then on to the next thing."

Middle school brought restlessness. At age 14, Genghis once hitchhiked to Pipestone, Minnesota to quarry stone for a peace pipe. He spent more and more time exploring Minneapolis on his bicycle. It wasn't long before he emancipated himself to pursue greater adventures.

Genghis' parents were mostly supportive of his endeavors, save for the time he wanted to grow marijuana in their home, John recalls. "Then he left home at 15 and a half and lived on his own after that. He quit school."

Susan and John understood their

son's wanderlust—that it was of no use to fight such a strong-headed boy. So they acquiesced.

Genghis saved money from odd kitchen jobs and moved to the Alaskan frontier town of Cooper Landing, reputed to be one of the best fly-fishing locales in the world. Yet the move was short-lived when he contracted shingles and was forced to return home.

At 17, he launched a solo kayaking adventure the length of the Mississippi River. Susan remembers dropping him off at the headwaters in Itasca. "We put him in the water and watched him move away and I thought, 'How is he going to find his way?'" Three months later he was in New Orleans.

"Going down the Mississippi was fucking the most powerful and the most beautiful part of my life to this day," Genghis would later say in a video he made. "And there's no way I could ever reproduce the feelings of self-discovery and the kindness of the American people I saw on that river. And I fell in love with the country."

He spent time in New Orleans, then returned to Minnesota to save for his next quest: a solo bicycle trip across Europe, pedaling from Amsterdam to Oslo, where he'd find himself working on a sheep farm off the coast of Norway.

He would later train to become a boxer, attempt to start a clothing company after honing his sewing skills while working for a tailor, then move again to Alaska, a plan aborted when he couldn't find winter work.

After his second stint in Alaska, Genghis retreated to San Francisco. He slept

on a cheap sailboat, his resourcefulness allowing him to live in America's most expensive city while paying a dock fee of only a few hundred dollars a month.

Genghis was gregarious by nature. He had a natural ability to connect with others regardless of background or philosophy, inspiring the people he met to offer a place to stay or a bottle to share.

"Above all Genghis was a people-pleaser," says friend Olivia Engel. "He wanted to meet everyone. He wanted to talk to everyone. He was always really curious about people who had different lives than him."

At one point he sold his boat to fund an expedition to Colombia. But his adventures became less frequent, and they didn't

**"HE WANTED TO MEET EVERYONE. HE WANTED TO TALK TO EVERYONE. HE WAS ALWAYS REALLY CURIOUS ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAD DIFFERENT LIVES FROM HIM."**

always pan out.

Genghis had been living hard for years. Matching his thirst for adventure was a sense that life was a party, and he drank almost every day. He'd done so since his teens. While he was self-aware enough to realize he had a problem, he was reluctant to change.

"He cried to me on multiple occasions that he didn't like being an alcoholic and he wanted to change," says on-again, off-again girlfriend Jenna Miller. "But he was very proud, and he didn't want to ask for help."

Feeling stuck in a San Franciscan rut and unwilling to make the life changes needed to build the boat of his dreams, he once again returned to Cooper Landing in the spring of 2013. The town, located at the center of Alaska's Kenia Peninsula, is an outdoorsman's paradise, where tourists come to fish, hike, and raft the Kenia River. Genghis rented a small cabin close to the shore and found work in landscaping and kitchens.

It was a promising new beginning, but an arrest for a DUI stole his mobility, making the tiny town feel even more remote. Sixty miles removed from the next nearest town in both directions, Genghis was limited to walking a stretch of highway that straddles Cooper Landing.

Still, he was determined to stick it out. He invited his father and Tommy Dixon, his best friend from Minneapolis, to visit during Alaska's summer season, when the sun virtually never sets. Here, Genghis was his old, adventurous self. He and Tommy set out on a canoe trip through the northern wilds.



COURTESY OF ERIN CUFF

Genghis had been living hard for years, with a sense that life was a party.

"The most beautiful thing I've seen in my life was on that canoe trip," says Dixon. "It was close to midnight and the sun had just set and the full moon was rising in between the mountains. Coming around a river bank there were three grizzly bears each eating their own salmon. We were floating by silent and it was like totally going back in time to before humans kind of fucked up the world."

It was around this time that Genghis encountered Paul Vermillion, an unemployed Iraq war vet living in his parents' half-million-dollar vacation home a stone's throw from Genghis' cabin.

Paul was a military brat who spent his formative years moving from base to base following his father, an Army surgeon who would go on to make millions in private practice.

During his deployment, Paul's 101st Airborne Division fought to secure a dangerous strip of land known as the Triangle of Death. By the end of the tour his platoon would become a notorious black eye for the military after four members left the base one night outside the town of Yusufiyah and committed horrific crimes. They were later convicted for the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl and the deaths of her family.

Paul had no role in these crimes, yet they reflected the conditions orbiting the platoon. Fellow soldier Justin Watt, a whistleblower in the murder case, describes the darkest aspects of that tour: "I've seen women die. I've seen dead kids. You name it, I saw it. Nothing was shocking to me anymore. And that goes for all of us."

Watt claims that Paul stood up for him during the murder investigation after some in the platoon turned hostile, believing his testimony brought unwanted attention. He says Paul was a brave soldier, if reckless at times, recalling the time he manned a machine gun without protective armor.

John Diem, Paul's team lead in Iraq, claims Paul could also be a bit trigger-happy. "There's a point where risk aversion becomes cowardice. Then there's a point where risk acceptance becomes stupidity, and for him it was almost pathological. He didn't see the downside of using violence to solve problems. Even if it was outside of common sense."

With or without this defect still lurking in him, Paul would struggle to find purpose once he returned to Alaska. (He did not respond to interview requests.)

Genghis and Paul appeared to have little in common, but Genghis often befriended people far different than him. And there were connections. Both were outdoorsmen. Both were alcoholics with recent DUIs. Both were more or less alone in the largest state in America, stubbornly stuck in their stations.

Without transport, they spent long nights together joking and arguing. Genghis would occasionally sleep at Paul's when he was too drunk to walk home.

Yet Paul Vermillion had deeper problems he couldn't dodge. Two IED attacks left him with a traumatic brain injury, and he likely had PTSD. On the surface, he could be kind and polite, but he could also become combative. The nearest VA facility was hours away in Anchorage, and Paul wasn't motivated enough to seek treatment.

He developed a reputation for being a loose cannon. One night he obliviously dropped a loaded handgun on the floor of a Cooper Landing restaurant, never bothering to pick it up. Gossip spread.

Sean Parsons, a town resident who knew both men, remembers Paul's frequent texts, asking him to hunt and fish. But Parsons was wary: "Didn't seem like something I wanted to do, spend a whole lot of time with him. He had a strange relationship with violence, I would say. Just a different way of looking at things."

He believed Paul was unraveling, sinking into mental "crisis."

That fall, Paul was drinking at all hours, and was accused of beating up his brother.

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MEGAN PACER

Then came the night when he pulled a gun on Genghis.

Genghis "told me that they had been hanging out at the Vermillion house and they had drank quite a bit," Jenna Miller would later say in court.

"They had been sitting in the hot tub, looking up at the stars, enjoying themselves and having a pleasant evening. Paul went to go inside, and Genghis stayed in the hot tub. And when Genghis went in to dry off and get dressed, Paul was standing there with a gun in his hand. Genghis said he had this look on his face like he was snarling, like he was just full of animosity. He said it was just like a switch had flipped, that Paul had gone from being a very jovial person and fun to be around to holding a gun, pointing it at Genghis and snarling, 'Get out of my house.'"

Parsons thought Genghis surely had "sense enough not to ever go back to that house. When someone pulls a gun on me, I consider it a divorce. I'm done. I guess maybe you get isolated up here."

But the two men patched up their friendship. Genghis would spend Thanksgiving of 2013 with Vermillion—only to see their relationship abruptly veer again.

On December 4, they started drinking early, according to a liquor store clerk who sold alcohol to both men. They spent the night at Paul's. Around 10:30 p.m., Genghis received a call from Jenna Miller.

"He answered the phone and before he said anything he was chuckling.... He says, 'I just poured beer into Paul's mouth.' They're already intoxicated—that's clear enough. And then he said, 'I love you' and I said 'bye' and hung up."

The alcohol pouring likely incited an argument. Furniture was knocked around. There may have been a fist fight or wrestling.

Then things took a serious turn. Paul grabbed an ice ax and began to hit Genghis.

Genghis' cries were loud enough for neighbor Cheryl James to hear. "I heard a yell for help," she says. But she didn't

**Paul Vermillion was standing there with a gun in his hand. "It was just like a switch had flipped."**

understand the gravity of the situation and failed to call police.

Crime scene photos showed bloody knee prints on the carpet, as if tracks left from a cross-country skier, as Genghis crawled to a bedroom.

Paul followed holding a 12-gauge shotgun. He shot his friend point-blank in the head.

Genghis was killed instantly. But Paul retrieved another gun, this one a 30-aught-6, and shot Genghis in the head at least once more.

It's impossible to know how many bullets hit because Genghis was so badly disfigured, Austin McDonald, an investigator with the Alaska state troopers, would later testify in court. Yet it was likely more than two. "There were more expended shell casings than that." After the murder, Paul made himself a drink. He called his mother and offered a vague description of the incident, saying he reacted in self-defense. It would take two hours for him to call police.

"I killed somebody," he told the dispatcher.

"What do you mean you killed somebody? What happened?"

"I was being beat up and I didn't know what to do. The next thing I know I'm calling you guys."

"Where is the person now?"

"They're dead on the floor."

When police arrived, Paul invoked military language to describe the death. "I executed the threat..." he told an officer. "I eliminated the target... I survived and I was ready to move on to the next mission."

As the dust settled in Cooper Landing, Paul was booked at a police station 45 minutes away, placed in a cell with fellow inmate Beau Reed.

Reed would later say that Paul confessed to the murder. "It was basically an argu-

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ment. He felt threatened. He grabbed his gun. He came out and killed him. Someone like that, they're not going fight hands up and shit. He's just going to kill your ass."

Reed offered to testify, but later refused when a deal to lessen the time in own case—Involving burglary and possession of a stolen gun—was taken off the table.

Still, Paul appeared to be looking at a case of intentional murder.

"At some point the ice ax was tossed aside, and the shotgun was brought into the picture and he was killed," said Judge Charles Huguelet during one hearing. "And then Mr. Vermillion got another gun, a 30-aught-6, and went in and put another round through his head. The ice ax, the shotgun, and the 30-aught-6 used in combination suggests rage to me."

Paul's bail was set at a million dollars, which his family promptly paid. He remained free with an ankle monitor for the next two and a half years while the case wended its way through court.

In the end, he would plead to just one count of manslaughter.

Prosecutor Scot Leaders declined to say why he took the deal, but problems in the state's case were visible. There were no witnesses. Descriptions of Paul's behavior before the murder were dismissed as hearsay. Defense lawyers cast doubt on detectives' version of evidence from the scene. Beau Reed's testimony to a supposed confession was gone. The state, it appears, decided to take the sure thing.

For those who believed Paul was clearly guilty of murder, the deal came as a shock. Former Alaska prosecutor Taylor Winstead worked on the case on behalf of a victims' rights group.

"The deal wasn't on the horizon at all," she says. "It came about last minute on the brink of trial.... As I understand it, they didn't really follow the best protocol. While prosecutors have the discretion to charge however they wish to charge and to resolve however they wish to resolve, it seemed like a huge drop from the murder one down to manslaughter.... Somebody was killed, murdered. I was surprised, that's all I can basically say."

Paul was sentenced to 10 years in prison, but he was released in April after two and a half years, for reasons unique to Alaska. The Legislature had reduced punishment for crimes below first- and second-degree murder. The law was in part due to slumping oil prices, which Alaska heavily relies on to fund its government. Slashing the costs of its justice system offered reprieve from the freefall. Paul was also given credit for good behavior and time served while out on bail.

Craig Medred, a former reporter for the Alaska Dispatch News, believes the outcome was also due to the Vermillion family's wealth. Paul had money to burn on lawyers, he senses, easily overmatching the cash-strapped state.

"The case clearly got handled differently and it clearly involved the fact the family had money."

John Diem, Paul's team leader in Iraq, believes Paul was a time bomb all along. When asked if he was surprised to hear of the murder, he stated, "No, not at all. He's one of those people with a character flaw that just the right amount of stress and just the right amount of bad luck was going to break it open. He's one of those people with a big crack in their moral compass just waiting for the right things to kind of align."

"I don't think there was anyone here who had any doubt that Vermillion was guilty," adds Medred. "...Vermillion is kind of really fucked up. Totally fucked up. Whether the military did that... I don't know. Who knows what the hell happened? The fact of the matter is we know it was a pretty horrific murder. What transpired leading up to it, I have no idea. Every sign of that murder is a guy who lost it. The behavior's just so extreme. It's someone emotionally disconnected and operating on things you and I don't understand."

The case remains divisive in Alaska. While there are a great many who believe Paul got a slap on the wrist, there are also those who believe he was protected by the state's Stand Your Ground law, and should have received no jail time at all.

Whatever the outcome, the loss of a spirit like Genghis Muskox remains. Friends and family not only grieve for him, but for his pursuit of adventure and ambition at large. His was a legacy of hunting big dreams and creating on your own terms, powered exclusively by determination. He had his faults—few doubt he'd still be alive if he'd quit drinking—but he also had a certain magic.

"It's hard just losing someone who had a life like that," says friend Olivia Engel. "Someone who shaped my life in a big way. Someone who taught me a lot of things, like how to push yourself and to be the person you want to be and going after the things you want to accomplish in your life. It's hard to accept the death of someone like that. Someone you looked up to in a certain way, who just does and accomplishes, and just gets through all the bullshit and just does."

Cooper Landing resident Al Fleetwood, 95, offers a similar sentiment. He had a hand in founding Alaska, and also created the Alaska State Bank. Like Genghis, Fleetwood is a thrill-seeker, skydiving until age 90.

Genghis used to check in on Fleetwood's dying wife. "I miss him more than I miss anybody," Fleetwood says.

Though he's lived a fascinating life in America's last frontier, amassing an untold fortune, Fleetwood nonetheless told the Alaska Dispatch News: "If only I had the guts when I was young to live the way he did."

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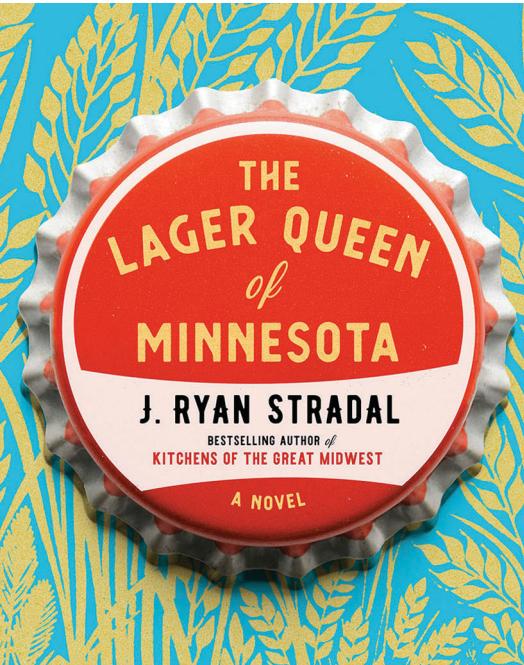
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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

# BLOTZ IS THICKER THAN WATER

*The Lager Queen of Minnesota* is a family epic steeped in local beer

BY JERARD FAGERBERG

In 1959, Helen Calder stole four bottles of beer from her uncle and disappeared behind a shed with the son of a dairy farmer. The eruption of teenage rebellion that evening would create a rift that reverberated across her family for the next six decades.

Calder and her sister Edith alternate playing protagonist and antagonist in author J. Ryan Stradal's new novel, *The Lager Queen of Minnesota*. Taking place in the fictional town of New Stockholm, the book bridges three generations of Minnesota women who, through a very Midwestern version of fate, find themselves embroiled with the state's robust brewing history.

Stradal's first book, 2015's *New York Times* best-selling charmer *Kitchens of the Great Midwest*, used foodie culture as narrative backdrop. While touring for that book, Stradal noticed a new phenomenon taking root in the rural Midwest: craft breweries. Even his hometown of Hastings

was building its own taproom by the time he began writing *Lager Queen*.

"Being a bit of a foodie, I was really interested in the ethos that goes into creating a regional or local brewery," Stradal says. "I would go to a town, and they would say, 'Have you been to our brewery?' I became really interested in who was opening these breweries and the history of brewing in the northern Midwest."

Stradal dedicates *Lager Queen* to Doris and Esther, "grandmothers that could, and did." Helen and Edith are obvious amalgams of Stradal's grandmothers, both exhibiting unmistakable traits of women cast in a similar lot. This familiarity emanates throughout the novel. You won't have to look hard to find the Calder sisters reflected in your own family matriarchs.

"They inspired the story, both specifically and generally," the author says. "Like a lot of people who grew up on farms,

they learned to tolerate, at a young age, the vicissitudes of their profession. That creates a personality that can withstand just about anything, that doesn't celebrate victories too heartily or wallow in failures too severely. It created, in both sides of my family, a sense of stoicism, tolerance, and work ethic."

Where Helen and Edith vary from the archetypal narrative is in their connection to the beer industry. From the age of 15, Helen shares an innate love of beer with the pair's father. Eventually, she convinces him to bequeath the family farm to her so she and her husband can restart the failing Blotz Beer brand. As essentially a stand-in for once-prominent Minnesota lager company Stroh's, Blotz gets huge off-bingeable light beer and an encouraging tagline: "Drink lots, it's Blotz."

Edith remains in New Stockholm, caring for her orphaned granddaughter Diana. Through a twist of fate and an unlikely act of mercy, Diana begins working for a regional brewer, learning to regard Blotz as factory-made swill. In one passage, she calls her estranged grandmother's beer "a bitter trial for drinkers of little experience or cash," championing the predominant mindset of today's craft drinkers. By the time Blotz is going out of business, Diana has opened her own microbrewery named Artemis Brewing.

*Washington Post* called *Lager Queen* "a savvy account of changing tastes in a changing culture," and those words are

not idle praise. Stradal admits he barely knew the difference between ale and lager before writing *Lager Queen*, but he is able to connect Helen, Edith, and Diana through time and beer by being an eager student of the culture. The trio's journey would be absolutely plausible were it not for the near-fantastical final chapters.

Stradal thanks Schell's president and fifth-generation brewer, Ted Marti, for helping him construct Blotz's arc, and it was Spiral Brewing in his hometown that gave him the perspective he needed to create Diana's journey from brewery janitor to startup brewmaster. The Brewing Projekt (Wisconsin), Lazy Monk Brewing (Wisconsin), and Bad Habit Brewing (St. Joseph, Minnesota) are named among the other seven breweries Stradal consulted to fill in his knowledge gaps.

"This brewery landscape isn't so dissimilar from what it was in 1880," Stradal says. "The selection of beer is much more diverse, but the saturation is very similar, and the appeal, the genesis, the brewery as a place of gathering, was really, really interesting. I really wanted to write about that revolution as part of telling this family story."

You don't need to know what "IPA" stands for to understand the drama Stradal's characters face. The author wields his newfound beer jargon sparingly. On two occasions, he drops the term "beta-amylase," but he's careful to only do so when it services the plot.

"I didn't want to write *Moby-Dick*," he says. "The knowledge became an adjunct of what was required for the narrative."

Stradal's goal, above all, was to make these characters collide, and the dynamic of craft vs. macro provided a rich context for that. Helen's romp behind the shed that night in the '50s could've been resolved with a heart-to-heart the next morning. Instead, Edith carries her resentment into the framework of local business. As any true-blue Midwesterner can tell you, you don't mix business and family, and the Calders learn that lesson over the course of a painfully Minnesotan 59-year dosey-doe.

By novel's end, beer does what it does best: It gives family a reason to butt heads before ultimately working things out.

"I try to put these characters in a position where their actions force them to evolve," Stradal says. "Growing up in Minnesota in a very conflict-averse household, I also wanted to put my characters in conflict. Nothing brings me more delight than Midwesterners in conflict." **CP**

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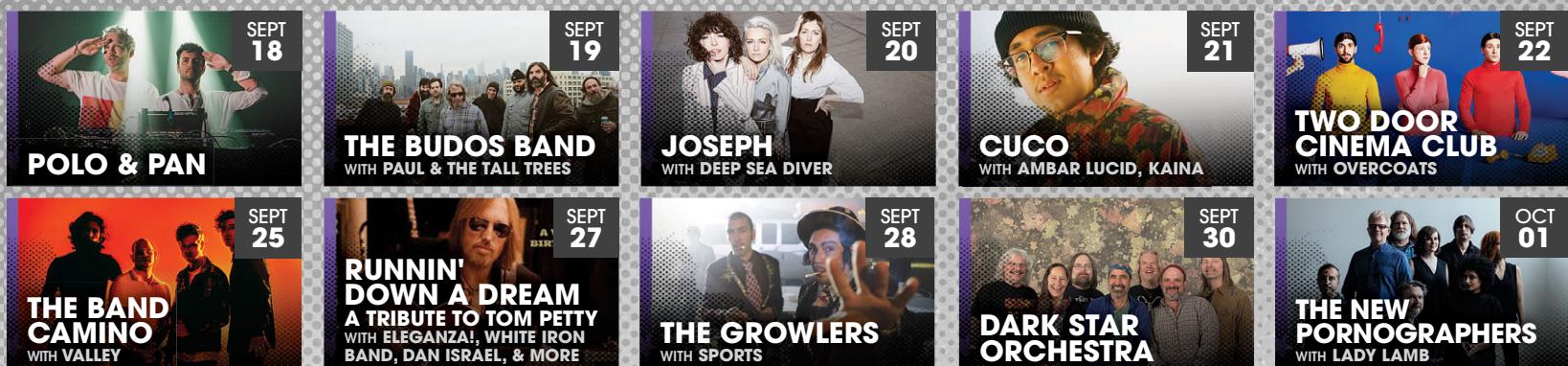
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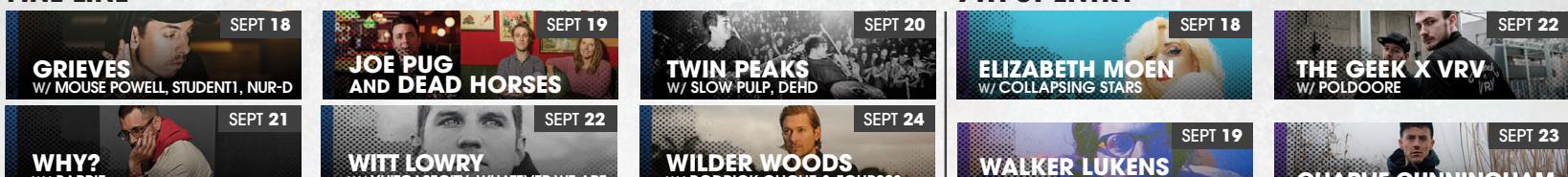
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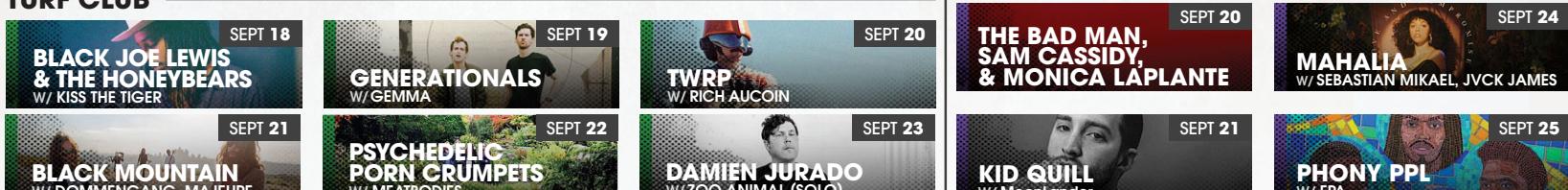
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## AROUND TOWN



# A LIST

**FRIDAY** Ananya Dance Theatre celebrates fall p. 19

**SATURDAY** Trylon turns 10 p. 19

**SUNDAY** Marc Maron visits Pantages p. 21

**WEDNESDAY 9.18**

**ART/MUSEUM**

## AFTER THE EXPLOSION: DOCUMENTING CHERNOBYL

THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART

It's been 33 years since a safety test on a nuclear reactor in the former Ukrainian SSR caused an enormous radioactive explosion and nine-day fire. Chernobyl continues to be the largest nuclear disaster the world has ever seen. On the heels of HBO's *Chernobyl* miniseries, the Museum of Russian Art presents "After the Explosion: Documenting Chernobyl," an exhibition of photographs taken at the time of the crisis. The pictures are from the archives of Major General Nikolai Tarakanov, who is also depicted on the HBO TV show. Taken by one of his staff members, the images capture the intense cleanup efforts as well as nearby residents in the wake of the explosion. "Documenting Chernobyl" opens in conjunction with two other fall exhibitions at TMORA. In the main gallery space you'll find Soviet posters from the museum's collection. In the Mezzanine Gallery is "Mystical Imprints: Marc Chagall, Ben-Zion, and Ben Shahn," featuring works on paper exploring Jewish mysticism.

Admission is \$12. 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-821-9045. **Through**

**February 23 —SHEILA REGAN**

**THURSDAY 9.19**

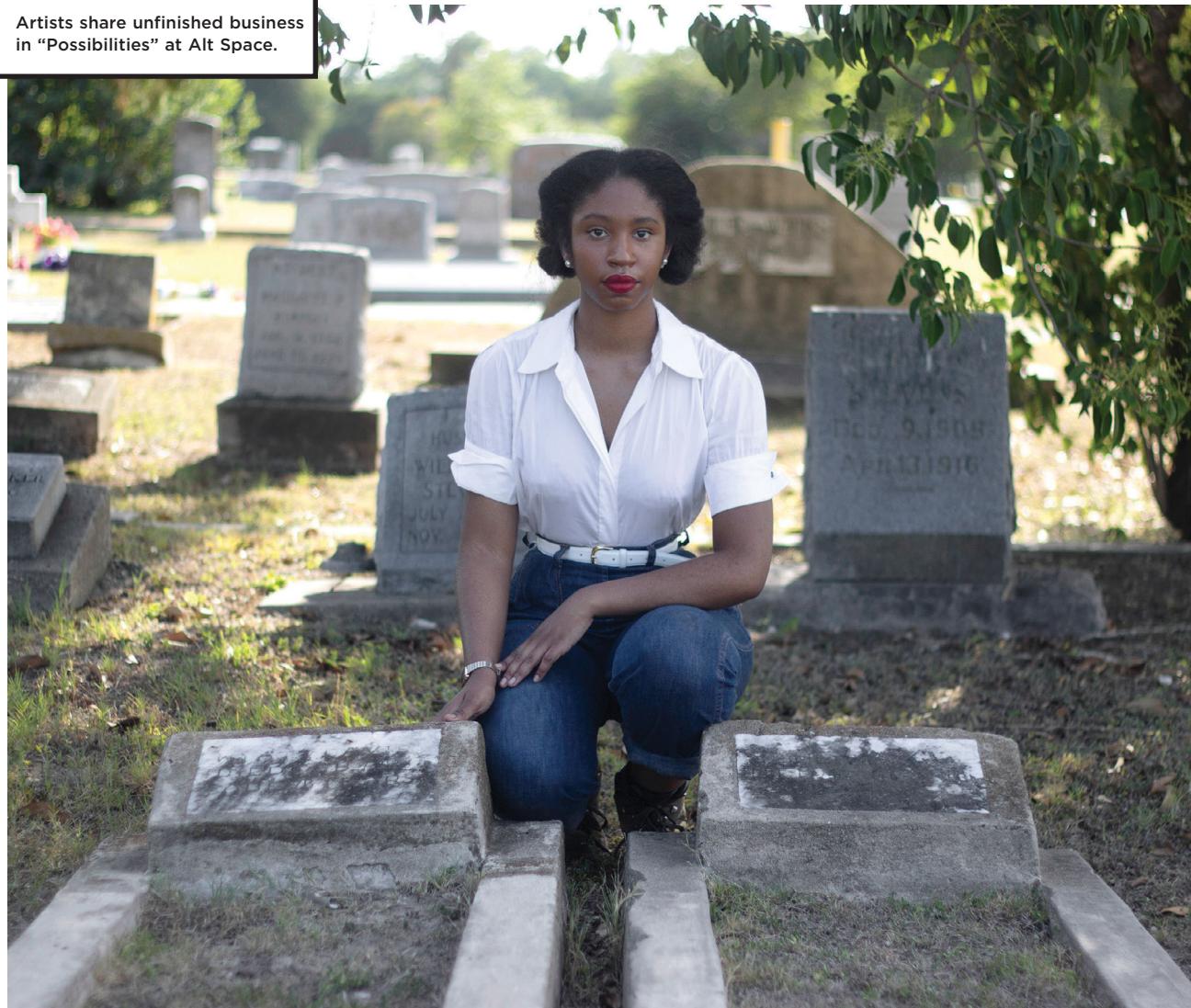
**FASHION**

## FASHION WEEK MN

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

This Thursday, the fall installment of Fashion Week MN returns for eight days of local fashion for all. That includes events geared toward people interested in gaining insider knowledge, kids trying out new stuff, plus-size lovelies, and fashionistas of all ages and abilities. It all begins on Thursday at 7 p.m. (6 p.m. VIP) with #Minnstafashion, a free party at the Foshay featuring cocktails, pop-up shops, and emerging designers. Saturday's happenings include a brunch exploring how secondhand and vintage

Artists share unfinished business in "Possibilities" at Alt Space.



CANDICE DAVIS

threads influence modern looks, and a fashion show featuring kids sporting K-pop streetwear by Twin Cities designers. On Sunday, Queen Anna House of Fashion will lead a frank talk on the ins and outs of the industry, and the Lumber Exchange will host a body-positive dance and fashion show featuring South Asian threads with a Minnesota twist. A runway show featuring models with disabilities benefiting Best Buddies MN will be held on Monday at Rosedale Mall. Other events coming up next week include IAMMOODYS black fashion party,

I AM MPLS!, and the Hmong artist showcase Fresh Traditions. This is a huge series taking place at a variety of venues, and admission ranges from free to requiring VIP passes, so check online at fashionweekmn.com for ticket links and the complete schedule. **Through**

**September 28 —JESSICA ARMBRISTER**

**COMEDY**

## LEONARD OUZTS

RICK BRONSON'S HOUSE OF COMEDY

At just 26, Leonard Ouzts is a top headlining comedian, a pretty impressive

feat when you consider how many people are doing standup comedy these days. "I think there are some people who start comedy and are good, and some people that start doing it and aren't good but think they are, and you do have that revolving door of people coming into the game and leaving," he says. Speaking of games, that's how Ouzts started doing comedy. A top high school football player in his home state of Virginia, he used to entertain teammates on the team bus. On stage these days, he talks about

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 ▶**

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THURSDAY

## THEATER

**BONE MOTHER: AERIAL TALES OF BABA YAGA**

THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART

The Russian folk myth of Baba Yaga goes into the air for this production, created specifically for the galleries within the Museum of Russian Art. Sandbox Theatre's aerial department, the Swingset, focuses on storytelling through acrobatic, skyward work. Here they'll investigate and recast notions of femininity, using the Baba Yaga tale to transform the museum's spaces into places of beauty and introspection. Nature, the untamed, wisdom, power, evil, and the transcendent infuse the work as it unfolds just beneath the museum's expansive rafters and soaring ceilings. The show is in preview on Thursday, September 19, 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. \$20-\$24. 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-821-9045. **Through September 27 — CAMILLE LEFEVRE**



MATTHEW GLOVER/SANDBOX THEATRE

## CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ▶

challenges of everyday life, such as dating, which has changed for him recently. Having been on the NBC sitcom *Abby's*, and being a headlining comic, people recognize him. "It's no longer, 'Where are we going to eat?' it's 'Why are those people in your face?' They recognize me from somewhere." He's developed a new mindset about it all. "I'll go out with my boys, and people will stare at me. Where I come from that means they're going to get you. But I just remember to stay relaxed. People just don't want to seem uncool if they come up and talk to you." 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 9:45 p.m. Friday; 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; 9:30 p.m. Saturday. \$16-\$23. 408 E. Broadway, Mall of America, Bloomington; 952-858-8558. **Through Sunday — P.F. WILSON**

FRIDAY 9.20

## DANCE

**ANANYA DANCE THEATRE**

THE O'SHAUGHNESSY

Ananya Chatterjee views dancing as civic action. Her company, Ananya Dance Theatre, employs a unique movement aesthetic that draws on the classical Indian dance form Odissi, the martial art Chhau, and Vinyasa yoga. Over the past 15 years, ADT has promoted a vision of resistance and empowerment for women of color. A recent rehearsal for *Sutrajaal: Revelations of Gossamer*, which premieres at the O'Shaughnessy this week, revealed

the bare bones of a multilayered work touching on everything from broken cities to the decimation of the Amazon rainforest. The production values and live musicians were not present, but the combination of fierce attack, nuanced rhythms and phrasing, sensuous plasticity, and utter commitment by ADT's dancers transformed a modest studio into a world on fire. The final production will include live music by Tish Jones and Douglas Ewart. Political dance theater has been around for a long time, but it is seldom delivered with ADT's level of commitment and charisma. 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$19-\$32. 2004 Randolph Ave., St. Catherine University, St. Paul; 651-690-6700. **Through Saturday — LINDA SHAPIRO**

## ART/GALLERY

**POSSIBILITIES**

ALT SPACE

Working at the far reaches of material juxtaposition and spatial relevance, the artists in this exhibition (including Katayoun Amjadi, Hallie Bahn, Zoe Cinel, Candice Davis, Elizabeth Garvey, and Gudrun Lock) focus on process and potential, rather than completion. Their objective is to generate space in which viewers become an essential component in a work's progress, whether our input or inspiration are put to use or not. Highly conceptual? Yes. Also? Invigorating. The creative spaces instigated by the exhibiting artists invite us to pause and reflect, assemble and

disassemble, as we see fit, rather than passively consume a finished artwork. Objects presented in the works vary, including notes, sketches, collages, prototypes, and video segments. "As the saying goes, the possibilities are endless," says curator John Schuerman. "In this case, we invite everyone to imagine with us." There will be an opening reception on Friday, September 20, from 6 to 9 p.m. 15 S. Fifth St. (skyway level of the 15 Building), Minneapolis; 612-240-2317. **Through October 11 — CAMILLE LEFEVRE**

## THEATER

**AUBERGINE**

PARK SQUARE THEATRE

Can the simple act of sharing a meal overcome a history of estrangement? Such is the situation presented by *Aubergine*, a poignant drama from acclaimed playwright Julia Cho. The opening production for Park Square Theatre's new season, *Aubergine* centers on Ray, who takes on caregiver responsibilities for his dying father, a man whose vexation at his son's life choices, including his vocation as a chef, have festered for years. Guided by the sympathetic advice of his father's head nurse and the assistance of an ex-girlfriend, Ray looks to find some semblance of reconciliation through his most expressive form of communication: his cooking. Setting the table for his directorial debut at Park Square, artistic director Flordelino Lagundino will oversee a thoroughly impressive cast consisting of Sun Mee Chomet, Shanan Custer, Song King, Glenn Kubota, Kurt Kwan, and Darrick Mosley. The show is in previews from September 20-26. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, plus September 24-25, October 16; 2 p.m. Sundays. \$25-\$55. 2020 W. Seventh Place, St. Paul; 651-291-7005. **Through October 20 — BRAD RICHASON**

SATURDAY 9.21

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FAIR STATE BREWING COOPERATIVE

Fair State often draws inspiration from traditional German breweries, but for this year's Co-Optoberfest its beers will have a notably hoppier vibe. Things kick off with the release of Double Mirror Universe, a pumped-up version of the standout hazy IPA. The daylong birthday party also features the release of two new fruited beers: Positive Jam, a sour made with black currant and plum, and Peachtea Keen, a table beer with peach tea. The fresh-hop ale It's Gold, Jerry! will also be making its annual appearance. There will be all kinds of non-beer fun, too, including carnival games, polka lessons, and a photobooth. Gerhard's Brats will be parked in the beer garden serving grilled meats and vegetarian options. All ages. 2 p.m. to midnight. Free. 2506 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis; 612-444-3209. — LOREN GREEN

## FILM

**TENTH-ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

TRYLON CINEMA

When the Trylon microcinema opened its doors in 2009, the future of the shoebox-sized theater was far from certain. Despite the conventional wisdom pronouncing repertory screenings obsolete in the age of streaming, Trylon's dedicated staff and volunteers pressed on with their vision of curated programming with enough eclecticism to attract audiences of all tastes and sensibilities. The venture paid off, resulting in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ▶

Fair State turns five with fruited beers and classic ales.



COURTESY OF FAIR STATE

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## A-LIST

Our dog party is hella cute.



CHRIS JUHN

### CONTINUED FROM SATURDAY ▶

enough sold-out screenings to warrant a sizeable expansion to the auditorium (and necessitating dropping the “micro” prefix). A decade later, as movie theaters around the Twin Cities have moved to include repertory screenings in their schedules, the Trylon remains the sole venue devoted to exploring the global history of cinema, both as a dynamic mode of artistic expression and as an unparalleled form of entertainment. With its mission to champion films of all genres and nationalities, it’s fitting that the Trylon’s Tenth-Anniversary Celebration exemplifies the same adventurous spirit. From early in the afternoon until late in the evening, the daylong program is designed to tantalize audiences with five secret selections: “a classic Japanese comedy, a 1970s crime film, a film noir, a French heist thriller, and a Kung Fu film.” Screenings are at 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 p.m. \$10 per film; \$40 for all five. 2820 E. 33rd St., Minneapolis; 612-424-5468. —BRAD RICHASON

### ART/FESTIVAL

## 2019 LOLA ART CRAWL

LONGFELLOW NEIGHBORHOOD

This weekend, art enthusiasts and the art-curious can see what creatives working and living in the Longfellow neighborhood have been up to at the LOLA Art Crawl. Download a map from the event website, [lolaartcrawl.com](http://lolaartcrawl.com), and plan your route, as over 100 artists will be showing work at a variety of sites, including galleries, studios, businesses, and even their own homes and backyards. That includes jean jackets featuring gorgeous textile work by Lauren Oland, jams and syrups from Indigenous artisan Simone Rendon, and jewelry made with vintage glass beads by Judith Kjenstad. Find other

artists working in clay, wood, furniture design, upcycled sculpture, book arts, and more along the way. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Free. 2727 26th Ave. S., Minneapolis. Through Sunday —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

### ART/FESTIVAL

## ART POP! BLOCK PARTY

GAMUT GALLERY

This Saturday, local businesses and artists are coming together to showcase the thriving Elliot Park arts quarter.

A pop-up market will host a variety of vendors, including Glam Diggers Vintage, WOW Metal Mobile Metal Lab and Show, jewelry made from bone and rose quartz from Lydia Francis Design, and Astralchemy, which sells witchy rings and planters that look like cat skulls. Live art showcases and hands-on fun will be offered for kids and grownups alike, and Sarah White, Al Church, Somali Museum Dance Troupe, and 26 BATS! will take the stage with music and performances. Neighborhood tours, a beer garden, and offerings from food trucks round out festivities. Noon to 6 p.m. Free. 717 S. 10th St., Minneapolis; 612-367-4327. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

### FESTIVAL

## CITY PAGES HOUNDS AND HOPS 2019

HERITAGE PARKING LOT

It's no secret that dogs and humans are BFFs, and this Saturday's parking lot party is all about that special connection. This dog-friendly happening will feature a variety of things to enjoy, whether you're on two feet or four. BB, a very good boy who works at Bent Brewstillery, will offer sloppy slurps at the kissing booth, while the doggie fashion show should be entertaining and adorable. Insta-famous pups (yes,

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SUNDAY

## FOOD

## TACO THROWDOWN 2019

EASTLAKE CRAFT BREWERY

What's community without a friendly rivalry from time to time? The Midtown Global Market normally brings people together, but for one day only, Eastlake and its taco-making neighbors are going to get competitive. A \$29 ticket scores attendees three tacos, two beers, and a souvenir glass. More importantly, it provides a chance to sample tacos from Hot Indian Foods, Manny's Tortas, and Taco Cat side by side. Try a taco from each vendor, compare and critique, and vote. Hot Indian Foods won the throwdown last year, but it's up to this year's taste testers to see if they'll retain the title. In addition to celebrating two of the finest things in life, beer and tacos, this event also benefits a good cause, as Freedom for Immigrants will receive 15 percent of all proceeds. Vegetarian options will be available. 21+. Noon to 6 p.m. \$27-\$29. 920 E. Lake St., Midtown Global Market, Minneapolis; 612-224-9713. —LOREN GREEN



GETTY

that is a thing) will also be visiting, including baby corgi Kevin, golden retrievers Loki and Thor, and brand ambassador/social media influencer Leo. Bring your furry friend to meet others, be introduced to adoptable dogs, and pick up samples and other info from local vendors. In addition to treats for good buddies, beer and food truck eats will also be served. A portion of the proceeds from this event benefits Secondhand Hounds. Find tickets and more info at [houndsandhops.citypages.com](http://houndsandhops.citypages.com). 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. \$10; \$5 ages 6-12; kids 5 and under free. 802 N. Second St., Minneapolis; 612-372-3700. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SUNDAY 9.22

## BARHOPPING

## HARVEST FEST 2019

56 BREWING

This is a fall harvest fest that's actually about the grain: This Sunday, 56 Brewing will highlight brewing traditions and sustainable practices with the release of their new Dunkel-style Kernza Harvest Lager. This beer features the deep-rooted Kernza grain and eco-friendly honey, and was produced using 100 percent solar energy. In addition to brew, the day will feature educational booths for the green crowd, a craft and farmers market to shop, lawn games like giant beer pong and cornhole, cocktails from Twin Spirits Distillery, and coffee from Wildflyer. Live tunes will be provided by the Last Revel, Good Morning Bedlam, Sam Cassidy, Mike Munson with Mikkel Beckmen, and others. All ages. 1 to

7:30 p.m. Free; \$5 wristband to drink (pre-purchase online for a free pint). 3055 Columbia Ave. NE, Minneapolis; 612-404-0056. —LOREN GREEN

## COMEDY

## MARC MARON

PANTAGES THEATRE

You may know Marc Maron as a standup comedian, a talk show host, a podcaster, an actor, or all of the above. Maron started as a comedian, which he still considers his main job, back in the late 1980s. In L.A., he worked as a doorman and eventually performed at the famous Comedy Store. From there, he went to New York and became part of the alternative comedy scene. Though he failed to land a gig as a cast member of *Saturday Night Live*, he did work on several projects on Comedy Central, including hosting *Short Attention Span Theater*. In the '00s, he became a radio host on the left-leaning Air America radio network. When that company went under, Maron and his producer snuck back into the building to record several episodes of his now very popular *WTF* podcast. On the acting front, his *Maron* series, which debuted in 2013 on IFC, allowed him to really dig into acting, but it wasn't until he was cast in the Netflix series *GLOW* that people really took notice of his abilities. Today, the guy who jokes that before his podcast he was planning to go out to his garage in L.A. to hang himself now has a million weekly listeners, an acting career, and is selling out theaters. 7:30 p.m. \$45. 710 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. —P.F. WILSON

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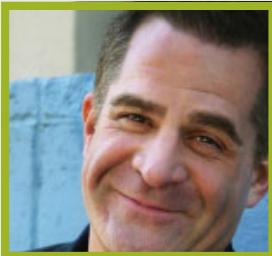
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FILM

# SPACE PITT

Like a Kubrickian *Apocalypse Now*, *Ad Astra* is a space odyssey done (mostly) right



FRANCOIS DUHAMEL/20TH CENTURY FOX

BY TONY LIBERA

**C**an a movie be considered great if the sum of its cool parts is nothing extraordinary? That's the question coming out of director James Gray's new outer space epic, *Ad Astra*. While the Brad Pitt vehicle nails the look and feel of a sci-fi classic, the picture as a whole falls short of its lofty ambitions.

Pitt plays Roy McBride, a cucumber-cool space cowboy. After a catastrophic electrical phenomenon dubbed The Surge wrecks havoc on near-future Earth, Space Command taps Roy for a top-secret mission to Neptune. They believe his father (Tommy Lee Jones), a decorated astronaut who traveled to the edge of the solar system nearly 20 years ago, might be responsible.

As Roy travels to infinity and beyond, his journey takes on a few different shapes. The overall expedition gives off heavy Kubrick vibes. A quick trip to the moon results in a *Fast and the Furious* chase. A distress call response flirts with the horror genre. And the looming conflict with Roy's father echoes classical drama. Weirdly enough, the

scenes work in and of themselves—maybe it's that there are too many references and not enough new ideas. *Ad Astra* plays out like *2001* meets *Apocalypse Now*, and while that looks good on paper, it doesn't seem to stand on its own two space boots.

Or maybe it's the ending-slash-final thesis that does it. There's a Coelho-esque realization about humanity and our relationships to one another that college freshman might find pithy, but the rest of us will consider old hat. It doesn't necessarily spoil the good parts, but it does leave you underwhelmed in total.

That said, the movie does a lot right. I'm a sucker for space odysseys, and *Ad Astra* plays the hits and plays 'em well. Guy falling through the bleak expanse of nothingness? Check. Labored breathing through helmet comms during a space fight? Check. Not-so-subtle condemnations of corporate overreach? Oh baby, that's a check.

Cinematography plays a huge part in the genre's success, and Gray's crew kills it here. Hoyte van Hoytema (*Let the Right One In*, *Her*, *Interstellar*) is the man behind

**AD ASTRA**  
directed by James Gray  
area theaters, now playing

the cam, and his work in *Ad Astra* furthers his reputation as one of the best cinematographers working today. It takes a lot of skill to manipulate darkness—computer-generated or otherwise—so effectively, and van Hoytema makes it look easy.

In front of the camera, Brad Pitt gives one of his best performances to date. Pitt's one of those actors who often looks like himself no matter the role, but here he really sinks into the character. A scene where Roy tries to contact his father via laser transmission on Mars shows the actor at his peak, devolving from buttoned-up military man to longing son with a subtlety that's as impressive as it is emotive. With *Ad Astra*'s release hard on the heels of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*..., you have to wonder if the 55-year-old Pitt is only now hitting his stride.

So *Ad Astra*'s a bit of a mixed bag. Sci-fi fans will enjoy the ride, but it's hard to imagine a lasting legacy. **EP**

# RIDE THE RAILS

Jungle's post-death musical is a roller coaster



DAN NORMAN

BY JAY GABLER

**I**t's a good thing *Ride the Cyclone* didn't open until after the State Fair. This fall, you can go to see the Jungle Theater's new show without subsequently having to decide whether to mount a thrill ride... or engage in any of the other, er, risky fairground activities described by the show's young characters.

The musical, with a script by Jacob Richmond and songs by Richmond with Brooke Maxwell, tickled Canadians for several years before finally landing in the U.S. in 2015. Its opening sequences introduce six members of a teen choir who lose their lives in a roller-coaster accident. Yes, really. The bleak scenario only gets bleaker when mechanical fortune-teller Karnak (Jim Lichtscheidl, in a box) greets them in the hereafter to inform the kids they'll get to choose one chorister to return to life.

The result is what you might describe as *The Breakfast Club in Purgatory*. All the adolescents get to voice their truths with individual songs illuminating their personal histories and private aspirations. This isn't a standard jocks-versus-nerds scenario: *Ride the Cyclone* zigs when you think it's going to zag, and then for good measure it throws in a victim who literally lost her head and doesn't even know who she was.

Director Sarah Rasmussen embraces the weird energy of this piece; it's the kind of show that prides itself on being unclassifiable. You may find it moving, you might merely be amused, or you might scratch your head in confusion, but it's impossible not to admire the creativity and sheer

## RIDE THE CYCLONE

Jungle Theater  
2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis  
612-822-7063; through October 20

commitment behind this production. It rides that roller coaster right off the rails, so hang on tight.

Rasmussen's Jungle is routinely employing some of the brightest young talents on the local scene, and *Ride the Cyclone* is no exception. Becca Hart, whose charismatic and deeply considered performances enlivened the Jungle's *Wolves* and *Small Mouth Sounds*, gets to use those talents plus her impressive pipes as "Jane Doe," the anonymous decedent who wears a doll's head as a morbid substitute for her own.

Her own ballad is delivered with a production flourish (no spoilers!) that succeeds brilliantly as a showcase of live theater artistry both in front of and behind the scenes. From beginning to end, the ambitious design team works such wonders that's it's hard to know where to even begin naming names from the long list of pros who executed this eye-popping show.

Music director Mark Christine leads an offstage band through the paces of a diverse set of numbers ranging from a Weill-style torch song to exuberant electro-rap. In a uniformly strong cast, the women are the standouts: Shinah Brashears is fearlessly poised at the head of her class, while Gabrielle Dominique plays a self-effacing student who comes into her own with a triumphant number that even includes, yes, a flute solo. This wild ride into the afterlife is good as hell. **EP**

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CHRISTOPHER GOYETTE

## FUN FEAR

Tyler Tholl transforms Maple & Beech from a solo project into a musical community

BY ERIK THOMPSON

**M**aking music can be a solitary experience. When you're writing songs, it's easy to feel isolated. But connecting with like-minded souls over a shared love of music can form a bond that feels like family. That's what Tyler Tholl experienced when he decided to turn his solo project, Maple & Beech, into a full-fledged band filled with relatives and longtime friends. And Tholl found a way to rekindle a part of himself in the process.

"I had stopped writing songs for a few years. It was something I had done in high school and college, then I stopped. Because playing made me too nervous. I was worried about public shaming," Tholl says with a nervous laugh, as he shares fries and drinks

with his wife/bandmate Nora Kain and Maple & Beech vocalist Nicole Wilder.

"I got some therapy and started writing songs again," he says. "I brought in my friend [Pete James Johnson, M&B's drummer/electronics], whom I've played with since sixth grade. We made an album a couple years ago [2017's *RUNDAWDIAW*], but since then we've grown. It blossomed from this little solo thing into a real band."

But though the band now has seven members (with guitarist John Knauss, bassist/guitarist Dan Lehn, and trombonist Nick Syman rounding out the lineup), Maple & Beech remains a personal labor of love for Tholl. He spent all of 2018 producing, recording, mixing, and mastering M&B's new self-titled record in his basement. When asked about the album's lengthy

creation and how much of a perfectionist he is, he laughs and asks Kain to answer for him.

"It was a long process," Kain says with an affectionate sigh. "Tyler is very much a perfectionist when it comes to music. The way he writes for Maple & Beech, I call it, 'More is more.' There's so much going on.

**MAPLE & BEECH**  
**ALBUM RELEASE**  
**SHOW**  
with Har-Di-Har  
Parkway Theater  
in Minneapolis  
Saturday, September 21

From my observation, it just takes him a long time to get all of that down exactly the way he imagines it." And there's a lot going on throughout *Maple & Beech*'s 10 songs. Grand, sweeping synths and lush string arrangements (by Andy Thompson and members of the Laurels String Quartet) augment vulnerable lyrics about being lost and lonely, seeking truth, making art, and finding solace in others.

Echoes of Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel, Everything But the Girl, and Elliott Smith pulsate throughout the record, as does the expansive production of Jon Brion. "[Brion's] *Eternal Sunshine* score kind of changed my life," says Tholl. "And you look at my record collection—Fiona Apple, Elliott Smith, Rufus Wainwright—he's done all that stuff. He uses so many sounds. It's all very big music."

Each of the 10 songs on *Maple & Beech* sounds surprisingly different from the track preceding it, though the album is still cohesive. The work tells a story of self-discovery and self-progress, of finding meaningful camaraderie amid the chaos of modern life.

Though *Maple & Beech* will be a digital-only release, Tholl has put together an art/lyric book as a companion piece to the new album. The book features colorful cover art—a work titled "N E W | L I F E" by Wisconsin artist Steven Duke—as well as artwork by J Klaye, Tholl's artistic alter ego.

But printing out 150 color copies of a 30-page booklet might be more expensive than simply producing a batch of 500 CDs. "The cost is probably comparable," Tholl says with a mischievous grin. "I don't really listen to CDs, but I do like having something to give people to read and look at. It's interesting to read liner notes, so I thought it would be kind of fun to hand these books out to people."

If that arty concept might seem pretentious, Maple & Beech wholeheartedly embrace the term. "Pretentious? Yes!" it says proudly on the front page of the album booklet. "You call it pretentious before someone else can call it pretentious. Art



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**THE BLACK HOLE (1979)**

Saturday, September 28 || 8:00 pm  
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## MUSIC

pop with a special emphasis on the 't,'" Wilder says with a laugh.

"There's something kind of embarrassing about writing songs and being sincere," says Tholl. "We talked a lot about sincerity with this record. The last album I was using a lot of jokes and nonsense lyrics, and this time I wanted to be more thoughtful and earnest. So I say 'pretentious' as almost a shield to protect the sincerity involved."

Wilder sings on half of the album's songs, contrasting with Tholl's lower-register vocals. Their creative partnership helps the material blossom and flourish, while touching on raw, vulnerable emotions that allowed them both to heal as the songs took shape.

"I'm not a songwriter, really," Wilder says. "So when Tyler reached out and said he wanted to collaborate with me on writing a song [album opener 'OK'], that was a new experience for me. What I ended up doing was handing him raw, unedited journal entries because I trusted him that much. And what came back actually helped me make sense of some unresolved emotions that I had. It came back as this beautiful thing, and I'm like, 'Oh, I'm now at peace with that four-year part of my life. Thank you, Tyler. That was cheaper than therapy.'"

**Maple & Beech** is divided into two sides: "Noise" and "Order." "We're not printing physical copies, so it's kind of silly that I even have sides on this," Tholl admits. "But I know that R.E.M. always did the two-sides thing with their records. And I wanted to be R.E.M."

The album's two sides represent the struggle between two contrasting forces battling for power and control that courses through the record. "Lyrically, this album is a search for some kind of balance or order," says Tholl. "The first half is about isolation, stagnation, and fear. The second focuses on how we might turn things around, put the pieces back together, and find some sort of connection. It's about how we move between these dark and light places. Ultimately, I hope that it's a positive message about growth and change."

While some of the songs originated in a dark, solitary place, a strong sense of hope and optimism courses through the album, along with a sense that it's better to share in your struggles alongside friends and family than to go it alone.

"It was more fun recording this album than the other one for a lot of reasons," says Tholl. "Because of collaborating more, because Nicole sang half the songs, and I was just in a better head space, I guess. I love these people. I love this band so much. I'm grateful for these people, and I'm grateful for anyone who would ever come to our show and listen to our music. It makes me feel very warm inside." **CP**

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## FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

>> By Rob Brezsny

**♈ ARIES** (March 21-April 19): We're in the equinoctial season. During this pregnant pause, the sun seems to hover directly over the equator; the lengths of night and day are equal. For all of us, but especially for you, it's a favorable phase to conjure and cultivate more sweet symmetry, calming balance, and healing harmony. In that spirit, I encourage you to temporarily suspend any rough, tough approaches you might have in regard to those themes. Resist the temptation to slam two opposites together simply to see what happens. Avoid engaging in the pseudo-fun of purging by day and binging by night. And don't you dare get swept up in hating what you love or loving what you hate.

**♉ TAURUS** (April 20-May 20): "I tell you what freedom is to me: no fear." So said singer and activist Nina Simone. But it's doubtful there ever came a time when she reached the perfect embodiment of that idyllic state. How can any of us empty out our anxiety so completely as to be utterly emancipated? It's not possible. That's the bad news, Taurus. The good news is that in the coming weeks you will have the potential to be as unafraid as you have ever been. For best results, try to ensure that love is your primary motivation in everything you do and say and think.

**♊ GEMINI** (May 21-June 20): Some things don't change much. The beautiful marine animal species known as the pearly nautilus, which lives in the South Pacific, is mostly the same as it was 150 million years ago. Then there's Fuggerei, a walled enclave within the German city of Augsburg. The rent is cheap, about one U.S. dollar per year, and that fee hasn't increased in almost 500 years. While I am in awe of these bastions of stability, and wish we had more such symbolic anchors, I advise you to head in a different direction. During the coming weeks, you'll be wise to be a maestro of mutability, a connoisseur of transformation, an adept of novelty.

**♋ CANCER** (June 21-July 22): Granny Smith apples are widely available. But before 1868, the tart, crispy, juicy fruit never existed on planet Earth. Around that time, an Australian mother of eight named Maria Ann Smith threw the cores of French crab apples out her window while she was cooking. The seeds were fertilized by the pollen from a different, unknown variety of apple, and a new type was born: Granny Smith. I foresee the possibility of a metaphorically comparable event in your future: a lucky accident that enables you to weave together two interesting threads into a fascinating third thread.

**♌ LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22): "Every masterpiece is just dirt and ash put together in some perfect way," writes storyteller Chuck Palahniuk, who has completed several novelistic masterpieces. According to my analysis of the astrological omens, you Leos have assembled much of the dirt and ash necessary to create your next masterpiece, and are now ready to move on to the next phase. And what is that phase? Identifying the help and support you'll need for the rest of the process.

**♍ VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): In 1959, scandal erupted among Americans who loved to eat peanut butter. Studies revealed that manufacturers had added so much hydrogenated vegetable oil and glycerin to their product that only 75 percent of it could truly be called peanut butter. So began a long legal process to restore high standards. Finally there was a new law specifying that no company could sell a product called "peanut butter" unless it contained at least 90 percent peanuts. I hope this fight for purity inspires you to conduct a metaphorically comparable campaign. It's time to ensure that all the important resources and influences in your life are at peak intensity and efficiency. Say NO to dilution and adulteration.

**♎ LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): In 1936, the city of Cleveland, Ohio staged the Great Lakes Exposition, a 135-acre fair with thrill rides, art galleries, gardens, and sideshows. One of its fun features was *The Golden Book of Cleveland*, a 2.5-ton, 6,000-page text the size of a mattress. After the expo closed down, the "biggest book in the world" went missing. If it still exists today, no one knows where it is. I'm going to speculate that there's a metaphorical version of *The Golden Book of Cleveland* in your life. You, too, have lost track of a major Something that would seem hard to misplace. Here's the good news: If you intensify your search now, I bet you'll find it before the end of 2019.

**♏ SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): In 1990, the New Zealand government appointed educator, magician, and comedian Ian Brackenbury Channell to be the official Wizard of New Zealand. His jobs include protecting the government, blessing new enterprises, casting out evil spirits, upsetting fanatics, and cheering people up. The coming weeks will be an excellent time to find your personal equivalents of an inspirational force like that. There's really no need to scrimp. According to my reading of the cosmic energies, you have license to be extravagant in getting what you need to thrive.

**♐ SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): "Dumb silly things," advised playwright Anton Chekhov. "Foolishness is a great deal more vital and healthy than our straining and striving after a meaningful life." I think that's a perspective worth adopting now and then. Most of us go through phases when we take things too seriously and too personally and too literally. Bouts of fun absurdity can be healing agents for that affliction. But now is NOT one of those times for you, in my opinion. Just the reverse is true, in fact. I encourage you to cultivate majestic moods and seek out awe-inspiring experiences and induce sublime perspectives. Your serious and noble quest for a meaningful life can be especially rewarding in the coming weeks.

**♑ CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Before comedian Jack Benny died in 1974, he arranged to have a florist deliver a single red rose to his wife every day for the rest of her life. She lived another nine years, and received more than 3,000 of these gifts. Even though you'll be around on this earth for a long time, I think the coming weeks would be an excellent time to establish a comparable custom: a commitment to providing regular blessings to a person or persons for whom you care deeply. This bold decision would be in alignment with astrological omens, which suggest that you can generate substantial benefits for yourself by being creative with your generosity.

**♒ AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Actress and author Ruby Dee formulated an unusual prayer. "God," she wrote, "make me so uncomfortable that I will do the very thing I fear." As you might imagine, she was a brave activist who risked her reputation and career working for the Civil Rights Movement and other idealistic causes. I think her exceptional request to a Higher Power makes good sense for you right now. You're in a phase when you can generate practical blessings by doing the very things that intimidate you or make you nervous. And maybe the best way to motivate and mobilize yourself is by getting at least a bit flustered or unsettled.

**♓ PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20): Syndicated cartoon strip "Calvin and Hobbes" appeared for 10 years in 2,400 newspapers in 50 countries. It wielded a sizable cultural influence. For example, in 1992, six-year-old Calvin decided "The Big Bang" was a boring term for how the universe began, and instead proposed we call it the "Horrendous Space Kaboom." A number of real scientists subsequently adopted Calvin's innovation, and it has been invoked playfully but seriously in university courses and textbooks. In that spirit, I encourage you to give fun new names to anything and everything you feel like spicing up. You now have substantial power to reshape and revamp the components of your world. It's Identity-Shifting Time.

[freewillastrology@freewillastrology.com](mailto:freewillastrology@freewillastrology.com)  
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**johnathan harms, daniel johannes**  
fri : september 20  
7pm : **laura and sean's movie and music trivia**  
10pm : **heartless–heart tribute band, goo goo mucks–the cramps tribute band**  
sat : september 21  
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**331 drinkin' spelling bee**  
10pm : **the personas, the shrinking violets**  
sun : september 22  
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mon : september 23  
8pm : **the roe family singers**  
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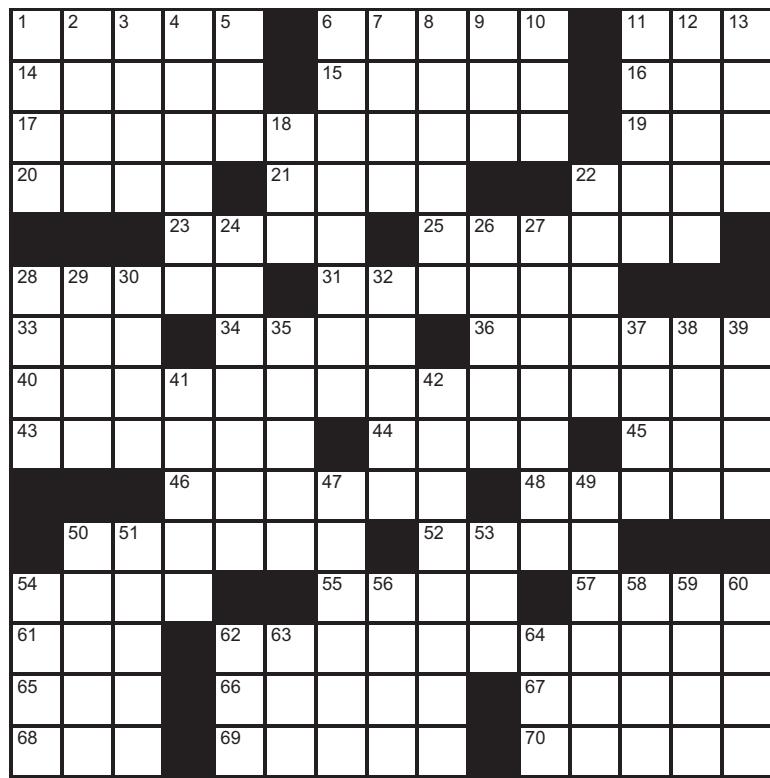
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BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

### Across

1 Doorknob metal  
6 Nocturnal mammal with a flexible snout  
11 "nice 1!"  
14 Ephesian land  
15 Atlanta campus  
16 One: Prefix  
17 Record producer born Brian Burton  
19 Bring home  
20 Minor hiccup  
21 Mountain lake  
22 His last word was "Rosebud"  
23 Product lines?  
25 Wuss  
28 Pigs  
31 Senior article  
33 Get the cup  
34 With 13-Down, "Groove Is in the Heart" band  
36 Tops  
40 Class for people who are hot all the time  
43 Shovel dirt?  
44 Signaled to start  
45 Day when people talk about dieting tomorrow, briefly  
46 Half of a Wimbledon win for Serena, e.g.  
48 WWII stalker  
50 Baby carrier brand with an apt-sounding name  
52 "Didn't mean that"  
54 Superfluity  
55 Female red deer  
57 MMA star Holly  
61 Serious stretch

62 Sudden surge of companies joining forces  
65 Tpke.  
66 Sketchy dude  
67 Jazz drummer Gene  
68 Freq. unit  
69 "There \_\_\_ coincidences"  
70 British racetrack locale

73 Foreign: Prefix  
78 Ireland's second-best-selling musical artist (behind U2)  
79 Leave in command  
80 Cancels, as this puzzle's theme answers  
81 Model show?  
82 "Yes \_\_\_!"  
83 C, another way  
84 Epitome of laziness  
85 Oscar of "The Office"  
86 The last version of it was El Capitan  
87 Culture that has been canceled in the long theme answers  
88 Cart-pulling beasts  
89 Major burden  
90 Elective surgery that sucks, briefly  
91 "Milady"  
92 \_\_\_ Nashville (country record label)  
93 Go wrong  
94 Jaguar of the '60-'70s

95 Last Week's Answer



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SAVAGE LOVE

## Boundaries

Is it okay that my 12-year-old is into bondage?

**M**y son has always liked handcuffs and tying people up as a form of play. He's 12, and the delight

he finds in cuffing has not faded. He lobbied hard to be allowed to buy a hefty pair of handcuffs. We cautioned him strongly about consent—he has a younger brother—and he's been good about it. But I found out he's cuffing himself alone in the house—and when discovered, he becomes embarrassed and insists it's a joke. I found him asleep one night with his wrists cuffed. I removed the cuffs and spoke to him the next morning about safety. Then recently, when returning home late, I saw him (through his window, from the back of the house) naked and cuffed with a leather belt around his waist. I haven't spoken to him about it. My concern is that there are some risks, particularly if he gets more adventurous. This is something he's doing secretly. He's smart, and has friends but sometimes feels lonely. He's going through puberty with its attendant madness, but he's very loving and kind. He is also quite boastful, which I interpret as insecurity. I can't help feeling that this bondage stuff is related, and I worry about self-esteem. Any advice?

COMPLETELY UNDERSTANDABLE FEARS FOR SON



**Dan Savage**

an erotic interest in bondage, a boy who's cuffing himself in the throes of puberty and doing so in the nude and in secret... that boy is almost certainly going to be into bondage. And that boy is going to be embarrassed when his parents discover him in handcuffs for the exact same reason a boy is going to be embarrassed when his parents walk in on him masturbating.

As for your son's insecurities, they're more likely a reaction to the shame he feels about his kinks than to the kinks themselves.

"People do bondage for various reasons," said Trikoot, a self-described "bondage fanatic" and occasional kink educator from Helsinki, Finland. "It's not always sexual, and it's almost never a symptom of self-loathing."

However awkward it was when you found him asleep in his handcuffs, there may be an upside.

"I was extremely embarrassed when my mom caught me," said Jimmy. "We merely went on as if it never happened. But it was somewhat comforting to know there wasn't going to be a major backlash. It was better than living in fear."

With the burden of knowing comes responsibility—not just to educate, but to offer your son a little hope for his future.

"Consent and safety are two of the most important universal issues in bondage, and CUFFS has wisely addressed both of them," said Trikoot. You should stress both in a follow-up conversation. "There are boundaries that should never be crossed, such as solo breath play, which regularly kills even experienced adults." Sleeping in handcuffs is a serious safety issue. He should not be sleeping in them.

Now for the tricky and super awkward and what will feel somewhat age-inappropriate part: At some point—maybe in a year or two—you need to let your son know that he has a community out there.

"When done safely, bondage/kink can be an extremely rewarding experience as he grows into adulthood," said Jimmy. "Some of the most important people in my life are those whom I've shared this love with."

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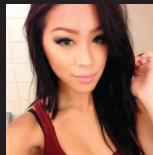
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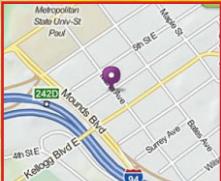
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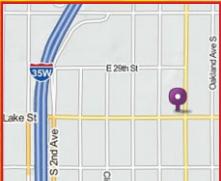
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